

I claim:

1) A process for producing an edible fried animal skin comprising the steps of:

- a) contacting a raw animal skin with an alkaline aqueous solution for an effective amount of time to remove the hair from said skin;
- b) removing the fat from the surface of said plurality of layers of skin;
- c) washing said plurality of layers of skin in water to provide a washed skin product;
- d) treating said washed skin product with an intenerate solution to provide a tenderized skin product;
- e) washing the tenderized skin product with water;
- f) treating the tenderized skin product with aqueous acid to provide an acidified skin product;
- g) treating said acidified skin product with a solution of aqueous hydrogen peroxide to provide a treated skin product;
- h) drying said treated skin product and cutting it into desired shapes;
- i) cooking the treated skin product to provide a cooked skin product; and
- j) drying said cooked skin product to yield a pet snack grade animal skin final product.

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2) A process according to claim 1 wherein said cooking step comprises frying the treated skin product in an oil at a frying temperature in the range of between 150 and 250 degrees centigrade.

3) A process according to claim 2 wherein said oil is any oil selected from the group consisting of: lard, beef tallow, partially-hydrogenated soybean oil, soybean oil, corn oil, sunflower oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil, flaxseed oil, and peanut oil.

5 4) A process according to claim 1 wherein said cooking step comprises roasting the treated skin product at a temperature in the range of between 180 degrees centigrade and 250 degrees centigrade for a time period between about 5 minutes and about 15 minutes.

10 5) A process according to claim 1 further comprising the additional step of: splitting said skin into a plurality of layers having a thickness dimension less than that of the original skin, wherein said additional step is conducted after contacting said raw animal skin with said alkaline aqueous solution, but before removing the fat from the surface of said plurality of layers of skin.

15 6) A process according to claim 1 wherein said animal skin is a skin of an animal selected from the group consisting of: cattle, swine, deer, and sheep.

20 7) A process according to claim 1 wherein said intenerate solution comprises an aqueous solution comprising a solute selected from the group consisting of: ammonium chloride, ammonium bicarbonate, and urea (carbamide), wherein the concentration of said solute is between about 0.50 % and 25.0 % by weight based on the total weight of said solution.

8) A process according to claim 1 wherein the amount of peroxide present in step h) is equal to between 0.3 % and 0.5% of the animal skin being treated, on a weight basis.

9) A process according to claim 1 wherein the concentration of hydrogen peroxide in said aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide is in the range of between about 0.1 % and 10 % by weight based on the total weight of said aqueous solution.

10) A process according to claim 1 wherein said acid is any acid selected from the group consisting of: sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid, and phosphoric acid.

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11) A cooked animal skin product according to claim 1 wherein said final product has a density less than water and which has a resistance to crush stress that is sufficient to support a downward pressure of any pressure in the range of between 10 pounds per square inch and 40 pounds per square inch without being crushed.

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12) A cooked animal skin product formed from cooking an animal skin by a method selected from the group consisting of: frying and roasting, which product has a density less than water and which has a resistance to yield stress that is sufficient to support a downward pressure of any pressure in the range of between 10 pounds per square inch and 40 pounds per square inch.

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- 13) An animal skin product according to claim 12 wherein said animal skin is substantially rectangular and has a size dimension that is in the range of between about 2 cm and about 25 cm long and about 2 cm and about 25 cm wide
- 5 14) An animal skin product according to claim 12 wherein said animal skin is substantially circular in shape.
- 15) An animal skin product according to claim 12 wherein said animal skin has a surface area of between about 8 cm² and about 1250 cm².
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- 16) An animal skin product according to claim 12 which is non-planar.
- 17) A process for producing an edible fried animal skin comprising the steps of:
- 15 a) contacting a raw animal skin with an alkaline aqueous solution for an effective amount of time to remove the hair from said skin;
- b) treating said washed skin product with an intenerate solution to provide a tenderized skin product;
- c) washing the tenderized skin product with water;
- d) treating the tenderized skin product with aqueous acid to provide an acidified skin product;
- 20 e) treating said acidified skin product with a solution of aqueous hydrogen peroxide to provide a treated skin product;
- f) drying said treated skin product and cutting it into desired shapes;

g) frying the treated skin product in an oil at a frying temperature to provide a fried skin product; and

h) drying said fried skin product at an elevated temperature to yield a pet snack grade fried animal skin final product.

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18) A process for producing a cooked animal skin product comprising the steps of:

a) contacting an animal skin with water at a temperature in the range of between 80 degrees centigrade and 100 degrees centigrade for a time period between about 7 minutes and 20 minutes;

10 b) removing visible fat from the surface of the skin by scraping;

c) rinsing the skin with water to provide a rinsed skin;

d) drying the rinsed skin;

e) cooking the dried rinsed skin to provide a cooked animal skin product having a resistance to yield stress that is sufficient to support a downward pressure of any pressure in the range of between 10 pounds per square inch and 40 pounds per square inch without being crushed.

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19) A process according to claim 18 wherein said cooking step comprises frying the dried rinsed skin in an oil selected from the group consisting of: lard, beef tallow, partially-hydrogenated soybean oil, soybean oil, corn oil, sunflower oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil, flaxseed oil, and peanut oil at a frying temperature in the range of between 150 and 250 degrees centigrade.

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20) A process according to claim 18 wherein said cooking step comprises roasting the dried rinsed skin at a temperature in the range of between 150 degrees centigrade and 250 degrees centigrade for any time period between about 5 minutes and about 15 minutes.

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